

1. Introduction

1.1 Proposal identification

Transport for NSW (Transport) is proposing to widen the Great Western Highway, between Rowan Lane, Katoomba and Tennyson Road, Blackheath from one to two lanes in each direction (the proposal) (refer to Figure 1-1). The proposal is part of the Great Western Highway Upgrade Program which aims to provide a safer, more efficient connection between the Central West region of New South Wales (NSW), the Blue Mountains and Sydney.

The proposal consists of two sections:

- Katoomba to Medlow Bath – about 3.5 kilometres of highway between Rowan Lane at Katoomba and Bellevue Crescent at Medlow Bath
- Medlow Bath to Blackheath – about 1.8 kilometres of highway between Station Street, Medlow Bath and Tennyson Road, Blackheath.

The Great Western Highway Upgrade – Medlow Bath (between Bellevue Crescent and Station Street) (Medlow Bath Upgrade) has been assessed in a separate REF (Transport, 2021d). This project occurs between the two sections of this proposal.

1.1.1 Proposal background

The Federal and NSW Governments are investing more than \$4.5 billion towards the Great Western Highway Upgrade Program which proposes to upgrade the remaining 34 kilometres of the Great Western Highway to four-lane divided highway between Katoomba and Lithgow.

The Great Western Highway Upgrade Program would reduce congestion, deliver safer, more efficient and reliable journeys for those travelling in, around and through the Blue Mountains, and better connect communities in the Central West. This proposal would contribute to the overall objectives of the Great Western Highway Upgrade Program.

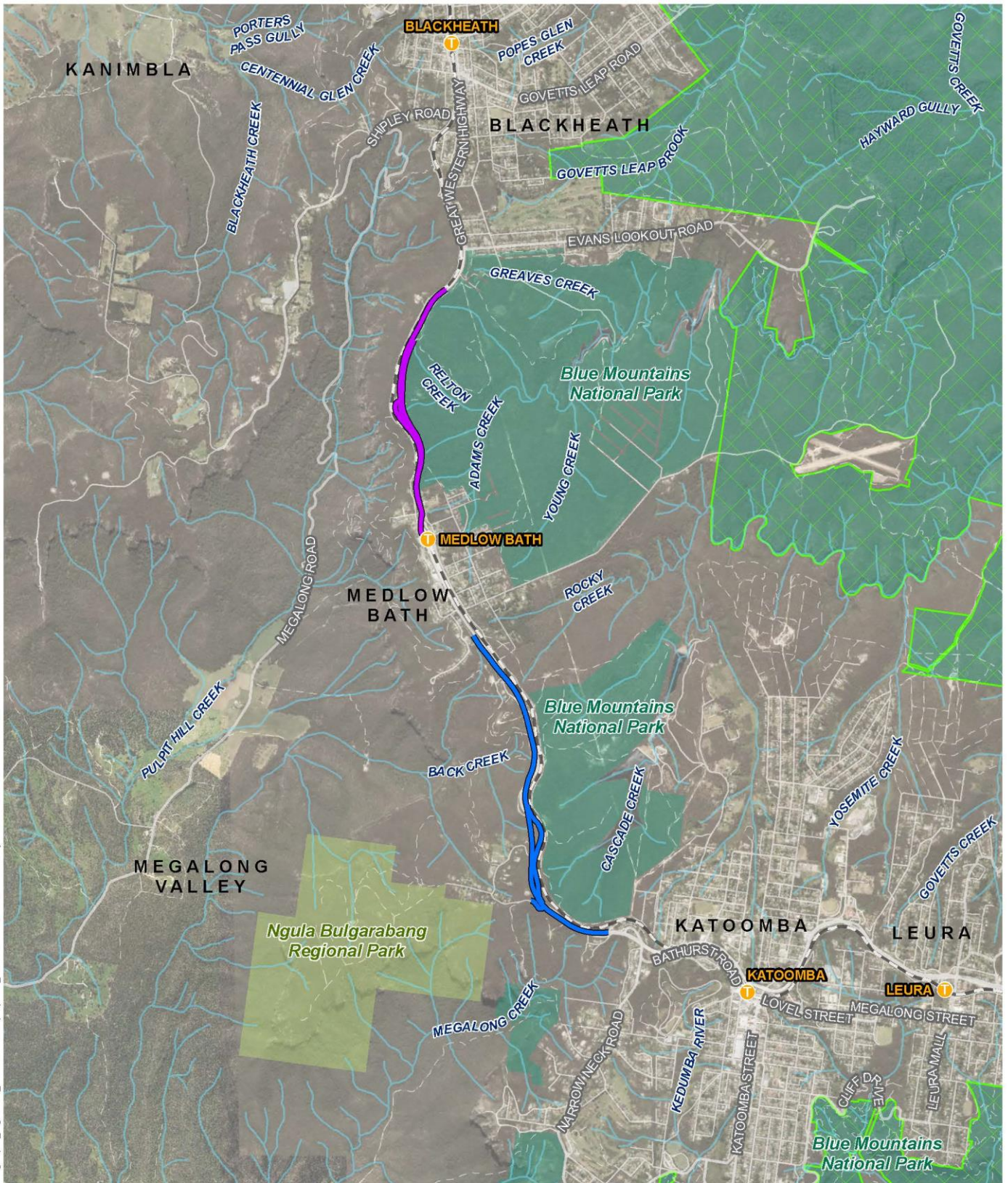
The proposal is referenced as the 'East' project within the Great Western Highway Upgrade Program.

1.1.2 Proposal location and setting

The proposal is located within the Blue Mountains local government area (LGA) (refer to Figure 1-1).

The proposal is along or adjacent to the existing Great Western Highway between Katoomba and Blackheath, maximising the use of the existing road corridor as it runs along the ridgeline between the Megalong Valley and the Blue Mountains National Park. The road corridor connects the existing towns of Katoomba, Medlow Bath and Blackheath.

The Katoomba to Medlow Bath section is bounded by vegetated private or Council owned property to the west and the Main Western railway corridor to the east. The Medlow Bath to Blackheath section is bounded by the Main Western railway corridor to the west and the Blue Mountains National Park to the east. The section of National Park immediately adjacent to the Medlow Bath to Blackheath section is not part of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

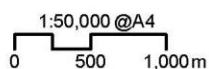


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- Katoomba to Medlow Bath section
- Medlow Bath to Blackheath section
- - - Main Western Railway
- Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area
- Blue Mountains National Park
- Ngula Bulgarabang Regional Park



Source: Aurecon, LPI, DPIE



Projection: GDA2020 MGA Zone 56

Great Western Highway East **Review of Environmental Factors**

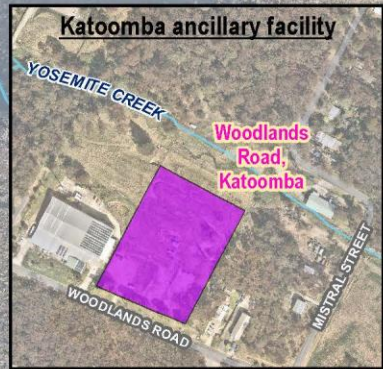
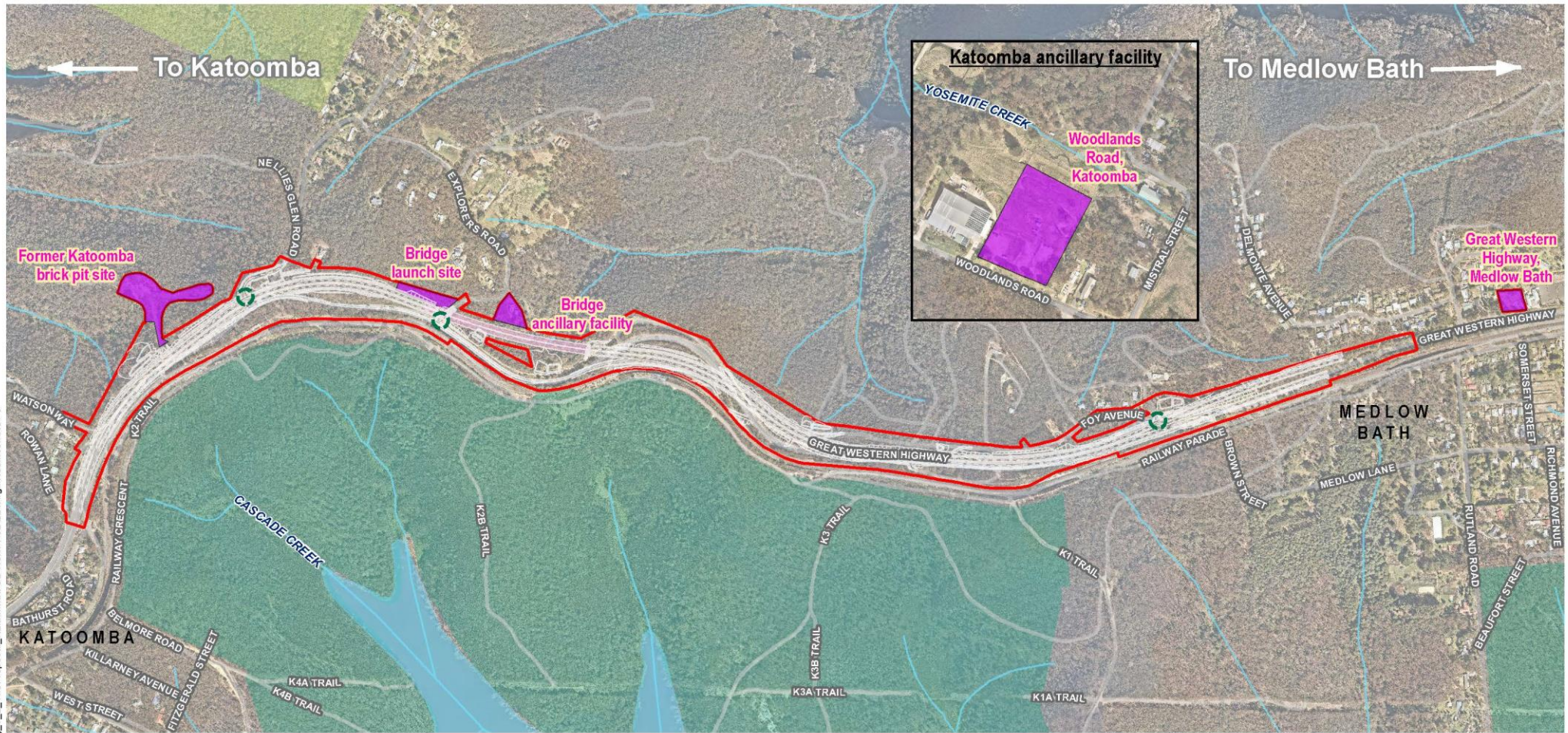
FIGURE 1-1: Location of the proposal

1.1.3 Proposal overview

Key features of the proposal would include:

- widening of the Great Western Highway to provide a four-lane divided carriageway in two sections:
 - between Rowan Lane, Katoomba and Bellevue Crescent, Medlow Bath (about 3.5 kilometres)
 - between Station Street, Medlow Bath and Tennyson Road, Blackheath (about 1.8 kilometres)
- new concrete twin bridges (about 400 metres long) over the valley from Pulpit Hill near Explorers Road
- upgrades to intersections at Nellies Glen Road, Explorers Road and Foy Avenue
- re-use of redundant sections of the existing highway pavement for new truck stopping areas, local service roads and maintenance areas
- consolidation and improvement of the Pulpit Hill heritage interpretation area on Nellies Glen Road, including improved visitor parking
- adjustment of bus stops on the highway at Bonnie Doon Reserve, Explorers Road and Foy Avenue to provide set down and pick up locations for buses
- installation of 11 water quality basins including biofiltration and on-site detention
- upgrade and enhancement of existing sections and providing new active transport connections along the Great Western Highway, which would form part of the broader Great Blue Mountains Trail to improve active transport connectivity between Katoomba and Blackheath
- construction activities and ancillary work common to both sections, including:
 - relocation of rail infrastructure, maintenance areas, access roads and utilities (including electrical, gas, water and telecommunications)
 - work on associated rail infrastructure including adjustments to power connections and rail corridor fencing
 - civil earthworks, retaining walls, drainage work, water quality controls and tie in work to adjoining sections of the highway
 - new national park, railway, fire trail and utility authority maintenance access tracks to connect with other corridors
 - final roadworks including pavement, kerb and gutters, signs, landscaping lighting and line marking
 - new intelligent transport systems including, but not limited to, closed-circuit television, variable-message signs and variable speed limit signs
 - establishment of temporary ancillary facilities to support construction, including compound sites, site offices, stockpile and laydown locations, temporary access tracks, water quality devices and concrete batching plants.

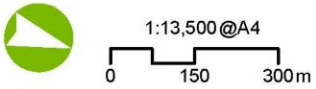
An overview of the proposal is shown in Figure 1-2a-b, with further detail provided in Chapter 3.



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- The design
- Proposal area
- Proposed ancillary facilities
- Bridge
- Blue Mountains National Park
- Ngula Bulgarabang Regional Park
- Proposed intersection upgrades

Source: Aurecon, Mott MacDonald, LPI, Nearmap



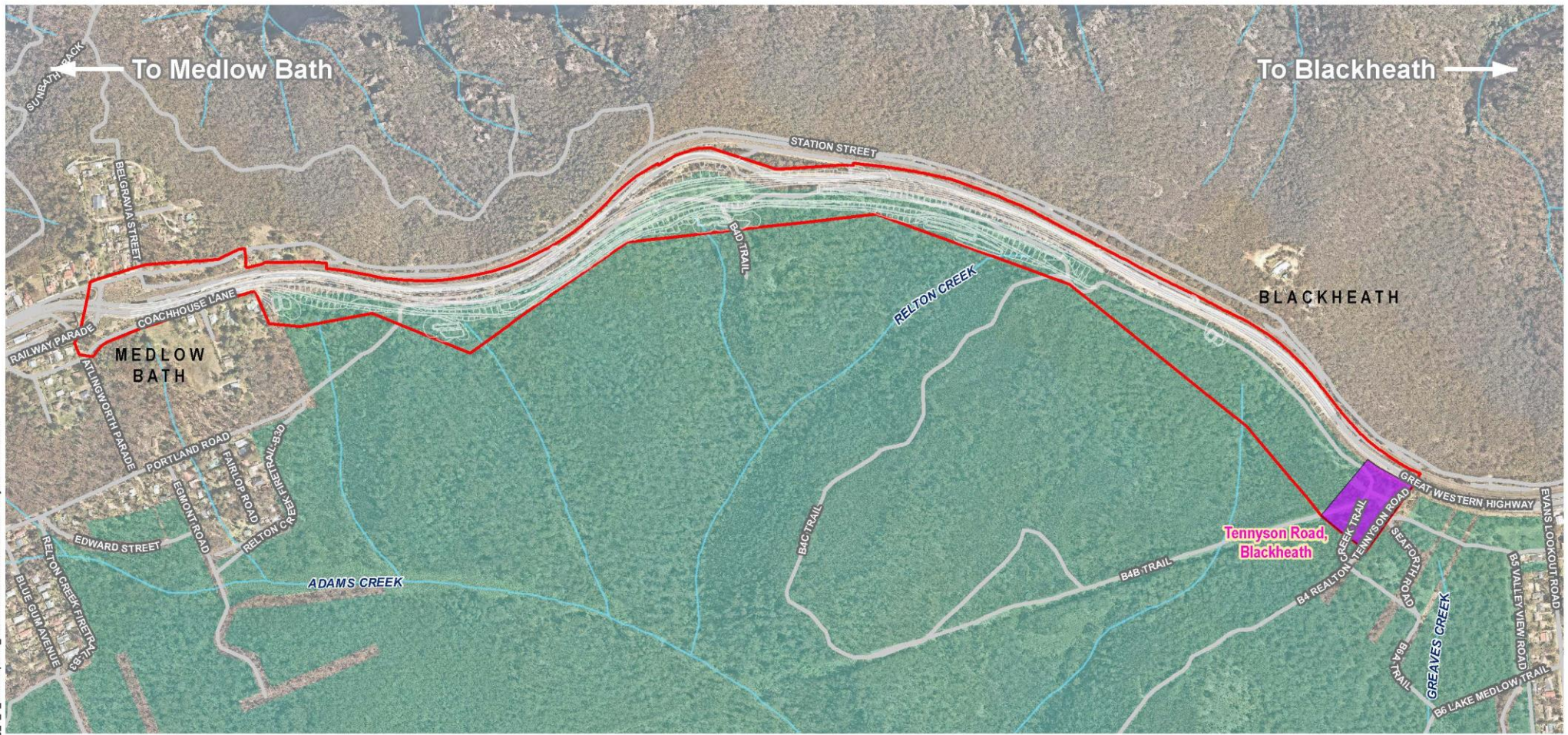
Projection: GDA2020 MGA Zone 56







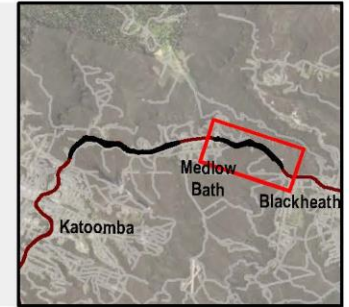
Great Western Highway East **Review of Environmental Factors**

FIGURE 1-2a: The proposal - Katoomba to Medlow Bath section

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-  The design
-  Proposal area
-  Proposed ancillary facilities
-  Blue Mountains National Park



Source: Aurecon, Mott MacDonald, LPI, Nearmap



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Projection: GDA2020 MGA Zone 56

1.2 Purpose of the report

This review of environmental factors (REF) has been prepared by Aurecon Australasia in association with Mott MacDonald on behalf of Transport. This REF assesses the Great Western Highway East – Katoomba to Blackheath (Katoomba to Blackheath Upgrade).

For the purposes of these works, Transport is the proponent and the determining authority under Division 5.1 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act).

The purpose of the REF is to describe the proposal, to document the likely impacts of the proposal on the environment, and to detail mitigation and management measures to be implemented.

The description of the proposed work and assessment of associated environmental impacts has been undertaken in the context of Section 171 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021, the factors in *Is an EIS Required? Best Practice Guidelines for Part 5 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (Is an EIS required? guidelines)* (DUAP, 1995), *Roads and Related Facilities EIS Guideline* (DUAP, 1996), the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* (BC Act), the *Fisheries Management Act 1994* (FM Act), and the Australian Government's *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).

In doing so, the REF helps to fulfil the requirements of:

- Section 5.5 of the EP&A Act, including that Transport examine and take into account to the fullest extent possible, all matters affecting or likely to affect the environment by reason of the activity
- the strategic assessment approval granted by the Federal Australian Government under the EPBC Act in September 2015, with respect to the impacts of Transport's road activities on nationally listed threatened species, ecological communities and migratory species.

The findings of the REF would be considered when assessing:

- whether the proposal is likely to have a significant impact on the environment and therefore the necessity for an environmental impact statement to be prepared and approval to be sought from the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces under Division 5.2 of the EP&A Act
- the significance of any impact on threatened species as defined by the BC Act and/or FM Act, in section 1.7 of the EP&A Act and therefore the requirement for a Species Impact Statement or a Biodiversity Development Assessment Report
- the significance of any impact on nationally listed biodiversity matters under the EPBC Act, including whether there is a real possibility that the activity may threaten long-term survival of these matters, and whether offsets are required and able to be secured
- the potential for the proposal to significantly impact any other matters of national environmental significance or the environment of Commonwealth land and the need, subject to the EPBC Act strategic assessment approval, to make a referral to the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment for a decision by the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment on whether assessment and approval is required under the EPBC Act.